

VZCZCXRO7910
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHDK #1932/01 2231056
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 111056Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5999
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001932

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, PM/WRA, DRL/AE AND INR/AA
AID/W FOR AFR/AA - WARREN, AFR/SD AND AFR/WA
PARIS FOR POL - D'ELIA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/08/2011

TAGS: [PINS](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: THE CASAMANCE: ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND POLITICAL
PARTICIPATION AS POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO INDEPENDENCE

REF: DAKAR 1005 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Janice L, Jacobs for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[11](#). (C) The Ambassador visited the Casamance from August 2 through 5 to assess the peace process and the impact of USG development assistance to the region. After several failed attempts to initiate meaningful negotiations, the Casamance continues to hover in the realm of "no war, no peace." Rather than resorting to direct military confrontation, as in the past, the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) and the GOS now resort to intimidation. The GOS secondary strategies of neglect and of attempting to divide the MFDC have not borne fruit. The MFDC admits, however, that its demand for regional independence has lost popular support, but it echoes local leaders' views that economic rebuilding and a role in decision making are critical in the search for peace. As we continue our efforts to support the peace process, we need to engage women and civil society more effectively and help the GOS to address development and land ownership issues. END SUMMARY.

MUTUAL INTIMIDATION

[12](#). (U) Although there has been no serious confrontation between the MFDC and Senegalese army troops in the last five years, both sides have engaged in acts of intimidation. To show that it controls the terrain, MFDC rebels occasionally attack passenger vehicles. We reported on the killing of a GOS sub-prefect (local administrator) in early 2006 by radical combatants protesting their marginalization in the peace process. All branches of MFDC fighters, including those openly espousing negotiations with the GOS, use landmines as a way to protect their zones of occupation and to ensure monopoly over the exploitation of natural resources, such as orchards and cashew nuts. During a meeting with the Ambassador, NGO Handicap International reported there have been nine landmine victims so far this year, as opposed to ten in all of 2005. One reason they gave for this is people using rakes to "de-mine." Some reports indicate that in the Sindian area of the northern Casamance, the MFDC pressured the GOS to agree to a "demilitarized" area, which combatants now use to engage in illegal activities, such as cannabis production.

[13](#). (C) The Senegalese army made its own show of force this past week when it deployed soldiers to Bignona (near the Gambian border). The Ambassador and other Embassy staff saw Senegalese troops and equipment leaving the port in Ziguinchor. The GOS said it is moving in troops to contain fighting between the radical MFDC Atika group under the leadership of Salif Sadio and more moderate groups

(considered "more friendly" to the GOS) trying to eliminate Sadio and his supporters. Locals fear, however, that the Senegalese army is preparing to launch sweeps of Bignona to rid the area of Sadio and his men. Catching the MFDC off guard, members criticized the move as hindering the peace process.

CALLS FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

14. (C) Casamance Governor Leopold Wade told the Ambassador he had not been involved in the peace process, nor have the women and youth of the region. He urged a dual approach to peace, combining political-level talks with infrastructural development. Robert Sagna, Mayor of Ziguinchor and senior Socialist Party (PS) leader, remarked that the GOS needs to implement institutional reform that would give the region more autonomy in decision-making and encourage economic development. Sagna is encouraging a more coordinated approach by civil society in the search for a lasting peace. He blamed the city's poor infrastructure, particularly its roads, on tight-fisted GOS policies. Sagna, a leading expert on the Casamance, was also frustrated by his lack of access to President Wade. The longstanding sense of neglect held by most Casamancais was perhaps best expressed by a former combatant who pointedly told the Ambassador: "The fight for independence is a fight for freedom . . . freedom to create a business and have income, freedom to feed your family."

USG PEACE AND RECONCILIATION EFFORTS

15. (U) The Ambassador visited several USAID project sites and held discussions with local NGO partners to discuss reconciliation and reconstruction efforts. These visits included an emotional visit to the grave of Colonel Boissy,

DAKAR 00001932 002 OF 002

the former chief of the village of Mandina Mackagne near Ziguinchor. This village was decimated and abandoned following a famous battle in 1998 during which MFDC rebels exterminated an elite group of 26 Senegalese soldiers sent in to displace the rebels. In 2002, efforts were launched to reconstruct and resettle the village to allow former residents to return from Guinea Bissau, The Gambia, and other locations where they had dispersed. These efforts were led by retired Senegalese army officer Colonel Boissy, who was originally from that village. Boissy, also a former military Zone Commander for Ziguinchor in the early 1990s, worked to organize reconstruction efforts with help from USAID-financed NGOs, and persuaded villagers to return. Today, a significant percentage of the population has returned and the village is thriving. While mines remaining in neighboring fields prevent a full resumption of prior economic activities, the return has considerably improved the lives of villagers. More importantly it provided an incentive for reconciliation between different families in the village, some of whom had members in the MFDC while others had members in the Senegalese armed forces (like Boissy). Reconciliation efforts initially involved weekend cultural events to build trust followed by traditional ceremonies of forgiveness involving active members of the Senegalese military and former rebel combatants from the village. Colonel Boissy's leadership created a model for village-level reconciliation and reconstruction which USAID has replicated in other localities. This type of village-level reconciliation and reconstruction has greatly strengthened grass-roots civil society effort to pressure the GOS and MFDC to achieve a definitive peace agreement. Moreover, micro-finance and other development activities that accompanied the reconstruction process have created new possibilities for former rebel families to return to peacetime economic activities and abandon wartime economic activity such as holdups and illicit drug and arms trade. During several different discussions with local officials and village leaders, the need for a two pronged effort to promote peace at both the village/community level as well as at the peace negotiation level was strongly reiterated to the Ambassador

and her delegation.

¶6. (U) Due to funding shortfalls in 2005, USAID had to close out several grants supporting village reconciliation and reconstruction in order to focus very limited resources on support for peace negotiation efforts. The latter is considered a priority as larger scale donor funded de-mining efforts depend on a sustainable peace accord. A multi-year grant was signed in July with PADCO to continue negotiation skill building work started last year that was extremely well received by both the GOS and MFDC. Additional funds are being sought (either FY-2006 fallout or FY-2007) to fully fund this program and resume critically needed village level reconciliation/reconstruction efforts.

COMMENT

¶7. (C) The stagnation that has plagued the peace process in the Casamance bears the potential to move in one of two directions. Fears associated with the newest deployments of Senegalese troops and persistent rumors that Sadio was recently in Cote d'Ivoire to obtain financing from President Laurent Gbagbo, who accuses President Wade of supporting Ivorian rebels, indicate the potential for expansion of the Casamance conflict beyond The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal remains. Nevertheless, attempts by the GOS to present a coherent economic development plan, accompanied by efforts to decentralize some decision-making to the region, would demonstrate its seriousness as a negotiating partner and could serve as the final catalyst needed to bring lasting peace to the Casamance. END COMMENT.
JACOBS